

# ***FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** October 8, 2015

**Agenda Item:** Proposed Land Trade for White Bear Fishing Access Site

**Division:** Fisheries

**Action Needed:** Endorsement

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 minutes

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## **Background**

White Bear Fishing Access Site (FAS) is a 46-acre site located on the south edge of Great Falls. Over time, problem behaviors have developed here involving alcohol, illegal drugs, violent behavior, public disturbance, vandalism, and littering. White Bear offers limited angling or other recreational opportunities. The site is located in a residential subdivision that adds to public safety concerns. In March the Commission approved a temporary closure from June 1 through Sept. 6, 2015, to help remedy public use concerns.

In May the Commission endorsed a request to pursue acquisition of a 57-acre parcel located on the Sun River near Vaughn. During that process the owner has expressed interest in acquiring the White Bear FAS through purchase or trade. The Sun River site has 1/3- mile of Sun River frontage that, unlike White Bear FAS, offers high quality angling and other recreational opportunities. The site has three ponds, and is located rurally, minimizing conflict between home owners and various recreational activities.

## **Public Involvement Process & Results**

From January-March, 2015 public comment was solicited on a proposed seasonal closure of White Bear FAS, approved by the Commission on March 12. On May 14 the Commission endorsed pursuing acquisition of 57 acres on Sun River for a new FAS. Local users supported this development. On July 8 the Commission met with the local FWP Citizens Advisory Committee in Great Falls, where Director Hagener proposed the possibility of selling or trading White Bear for a different site. Public sentiment supported a long term solution. On July 16, FWP met with Cascade County Commissioners, who each supported the proposal.

## **Alternatives and Analysis**

White Bear FAS – Continue to manage the site for a high percentage of non-sporting use. Ask the Commission for seasonal closures in future years to control/curb problem behaviors during summer months. Alternatively, trade or sell White Bear FAS for an alternative access site.

Sun River property – Pursue acquisition through traditional means such as purchase in fee title. Alternatively, acquire whole or in part through trade for the White Bear FAS.

## **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends the Commission endorse its request to conduct due diligence towards a trade of 57 acres of land on the Sun River for the White Bear FAS. A land trade would involve appropriate due diligence, survey and appraisal of properties, public scoping, an environmental assessment and decision notice, and final approval from the Commission and the Montana Land Board.

## **Proposed Motion**

I move the Commission endorse FWP's request to perform due diligence toward the trade of 56 acres of land on the Sun River in exchange for the White Bear FAS.